The Calling

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The Calling

by Lamenous

Summary

Will doesn't say anything as Beverly draws his blood, not sure what to expect. She takes care with the sample. It only takes her twenty minutes before she returns with her regular easy smile.

"Well, Will Graham. Looks like you're one-hundred percent human."

...
Hannibal isn't so lucky.

An epidemic that gives humans animalistic qualities takes the world by storm. Elk!Hannibal sets his focus on Will who still remains fully human. For the most part.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Antler Birth

Chapter Summary

Will gets lucky for once.

Chapter Notes

I promised another animal(-esque) au for Hannigram so here it is!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The great travesty, the miracle to some, the *phenomenon* to most, gets its name rather quickly. It becomes known as the B.H.D., an acronym for Beast Hybrid Disorder.

Of course, not to be confused with Birt-Hogg-Dube, a syndrome which produces skin lesions, or Bahraini Dinar, the currency. It takes the world by surprise, and the people affected by it, obviously moreso. But like most biologically altering diseases, viruses, or other such epidemics which affect the global population, everyone quickly adapts and gives up on reverting the side effects. Cat ear sales go up, and pet play kink video views triple on porn sites. The phenomenon affects more than fifteen percent of the population by the end of the month, and scientists predict the number will only sprint upwards.

Will first hears about it from a TV announcement at a quiet little gas station on some obfuscated road in Wolf Trap. He's shoving a display door on the sodas when he grows immediately skeptical about the dramatic retelling of a person who supposedly woke up with an insatiable hunger that led to them mauling their pets alive. Under the gas station fluorescents, with the backdrop of the occasional beeping from the register, the story seems like a non issue. Nothing mental health help can't fix. But Will of all people should know better. (*You're resolutely unfixed)*.

"That's 10.99," the clerk says, looking as nonplussed as Will when a picture of a man with hyena ears enters the corner square while the reporter galvanizes beside it on the small TV.

Will turns his face away from the flashing headline and pays for his cheap water-based coffee and gas station taquitos and finally leaves without much fanfare. He drives to work peacefully, already forgetting about the strange news headline with an ease common among men who have long buried the amount of fucks left they had to give in favor of chewing through monterey jack and beef taco extravaganzas on the trip to work.

The B.A.U. offices are suspiciously empty when Will arrives, and it's not until he notices this that Will decides to check his email to find that everyone's been given a few days off in light of this new 'worrying epidemic'. Will scoffs, wondering when the F.B.I. decided to start falling for Fox News hoaxes and relents that he at least now has the day to himself. He grumpily tosses the empty coffee cup into the gaping-mouthed bin on the way out his office and immediately bumps into Beverly.

"Will!" Beverly exclaims in friendly surprise. She seems uncharacteristically disheveled as she gives him a short onceover and bluntly asks, "You haven't become beastly, have you?"

A pause.

"What?" Will asks, somewhat stupefied.

"B.H.D.," Beverly clarifies, visibly assessing him. "You don't have it, do you?"

"Oh." Will weighs the chances of Beverly dragging out a joke like this for so long. While he wouldn't put it past Brian and Jimmy, Beverly sometimes does go along with a funny bit if she's particularly bored. But she wasn't with him to see the announcement this morning, which leaves only a second, more worrying option. "I've been told I smell like dog. But I didn't wake up eager to sniff my ass, if that's what you're asking," Will tries to joke.

Beverly's eyes become inquisitive. "I can test you for it, if you like. I've been up all night studying samples with Jimmy and Z."

This is not the response Will expects to hear. Beverly takes his stunned silence in stride and swivels on the heels of her feet to begin leading them through the halls. Will reluctantly follows her, noting the empty rooms on their way to the elevator.

"A shame we're not getting paid for this. It's worth using the lab resources though."

They arrive at the labs in record time now that the halls aren't crowded. With people that is. Will immediately notices several chinese food takeout boxes littered over one of the metal gurneys. A half empty Papa John's box is held up to Will's face by Brian in greeting. Will hesitantly grabs a slice and wonders about lab contamination procedures before the thought line is interrupted by an excited Jimmy appearing from next door.

"Will!" Jimmy cheers. He seems to slow his approach, eyeing Will over somewhat expectantly.

It ruffles Will's (metaphorical) feathers. But a part of him is maybe just as surprised as they are, as if Will's disposition to being a social recluse grants him V.I.P status to inheriting yet another emblematic trait for his roster.

"Hm," Jimmy ponders. "Well, there are two other types."

"Pardon?" Will asks.

"Type A is the most obvious," Brian explains through a mouthful of cheese and mushroom. "It gives you the cute ears, maybe a tail, feathers, scales, whatever, etcetera." He swallows what's left in his mouth as he waves a lazy hand in the air. "Along with the instincts."

"Type B is similar minus the visible animal features. It comes with new eating habits, change in senses of smell, better or poorer vision, the works." Beverly produces a graph analysis and tacks it onto the board. Beside the infographic is a crude set of drawings representing each category(likely made by Brian).

"Type C is harder to detect. It's entirely psychological." Jimmy places a set of samples in the freezer as Brian makes a loopy motion with his index finger beside his temples. "Very few have been recorded with it. But there's plenty time."

Will can read his line of thought even without the aid of his empathy. Cynicism sheaths over Will like a second skin. "When do I give you my blood?" He says sardonically, eyes flicking elsewhere.

"We're only trying to get as many comparison samples. It's fun," Beverly says. "If nothing else you can rest easy knowing you won't catch yourself pissing over a fire hydrant anytime soon. Or chewing mice. Or thinking like one."

"My older brother has it. Found out last night," Brian says as if it will be of any comfort to Will whose fate is undetermined but whose bad luck is still a track star by all accounts. "He's a type A cat hybrid. I'm somewhat jealous, he's been stopped for pictures by several women on his way to work."

"Cat hybrid does sound cute," Jimmy cooes.

"Alana sent me a message saying she has it too. Developed it two nights ago," Beverly says.

Will perks up at this, curious to hear more.

"Peacock. Type B as of now. I wish we'd get to see her grow feathers. I feel it would suit her."

"Is it detrimental to the infected person's health?" Will asks.

"No, they're by all angles quite healthy. Just, well, changed."

Will thinks on that. What it must be like to suddenly be more in tune with other animalia genus outside of homo sapiens and foster a better connection to base life on the very planet that has given up on it. He doesn't say anything as Beverly draws his blood, not sure what to

expect. She takes care with the sample. It only takes her twenty minutes before she returns with her regular easy smile.

"Well, Will Graham. Looks like you're one-hundred percent human."

…

Hannibal isn't so lucky.

There's not much to speak of on Monday night of that week. His head starts to itch a little. A scratch here and there, and it's gone. Tuesday brings the feet aches. Wednesday has Hannibal turning off all heating systems from his home. He sleeps in newborn fashion that night, naked and tossing around in frustration. Thursday arrives and almost all symptoms have eased up. He gets through his appointments with patients at a leisurely but otherwise unbothered pace. And then Will arrives.

Will is as trepid and empathetically fragile as the last session. His glassy blue-green eyes seem to soak in all color fractures from the room wherever he points them. Hannibal watches as Will's words spill out of him, gleaming iridescently with another killer's diction.

Perhaps it's the walking open wound that is Will Graham which prompts Hannibal to want to drink in everything the man has to offer. He tries to catch Will's attention with his words, but Will's fluid mind simply leaks from Hannibal's cupped palms, leaving them waiting. Finally, Hannibal offers his gaze as a flask, but really, it's a lingering touch behind the shorter man's shoulder that has Will coming together into solidity. He meets Hannibal's eyes.

Hannibal holds him for as long as he can, mind trembling to crowd the blue irises now reflecting his image. Will soon after looks away. But the moment is not gone. It's been bottled away in Hannibal's mind palace, to ferment there for better taste some day.

"You're seasonal," Hannibal says then. Like he might be describing decorative napkins or a winter flower. He chooses to be more direct this time. "What do you normally do, when you need to find opaque grounds?"

Will shifts his mouth, pursing it almost selfishly, in Hannibal’s eye, by hiding the movement of his tongue as it clicks on the cavern's roof. "I spend time with my dogs, mostly. I also try at a few naps."

"You're unsuccessful."

"I still think lying there might be doing something for me."

"So they say."

Will squints at Hannibal. "Is that a sex joke?"

"No." Hannibal smiles. He thinks of the blood he found slipping off the basement meat freezer this morning, pooling into the pale drainage and casting it in sharp relief. Hannibal doesn't clean it up for the same reasons Will can't bring himself to sleep.

"Well, what do you do?" Will looks particularly transparent then. If Hannibal peeks in closer he can spot a small flame color tickling Will's cheeks.

Hannibal doesn't know why it happens. It's not a particularly fascinating moment, when compared to some other ones also produced by Will's company. But it's perhaps because it is so commonplace an emotion (someone's face resembling the blushing peonies, made special this time only because Will does it) and solidly mundane an event (Hannibal's reaction to Will's openness) that the hollow call echoes around the room. It's loud and grating, like chafed wheels slowing desperately on a rusty train track. it chafes both his and Will's hearing to an extent that prevents Hannibal from immediately realizing the noise is actually coming from within.

It extends only for a few seconds, but it is enough to chill the bones of both the room's occupants. Will's eyes widen and Hannibal is left wordless.

"What…what was *that*?" Will asks, but he stops looking at Hannibal and takes his eyes to the room, the windows, and settles on the walls. He is haunted now, distracted by ghosts Hannibal cannot see.

It was me, Hannibal thinks in protest. *Not them*.

His head starts to itch again. Not long after Will leaves their session Hannibal grows weak at the knees and feels something inside him squeeze. He tries not to let his ailment tussle him to the ground but every attempt to walk feels like a calf's step out the birth canal. He fumbles for his desk's support in conjunction with an excruciating pain bursting from his cranium. His nails thicken and scratch along the top of the desk, raking deep marks as he falls down to his knees at the side of it.

Hannibal pants as he clutches what he can, not knowing what to do, or what is happening to him. Thick blood drips from his cranium into his eyes, clouding his vision while something loud vibrates within his chest. He feebly wipes what he can with his sleeve, disoriented and trembling. As he hastily rubs the blood off his eyes and forehead his sleeve snags on something at the top there.

After some time, Hannibal manages to bring himself to a standing position, reaching a hand up to his hairline where a pair of antlers have began their growth.

Chapter End Notes

Have you guys heard what an Elk's bugling sounds like? Please look it up for reference to the noise Hannibal made lmfao.

Growing Antlers

Chapter Summary

Will's POV and some case tidbit.

Chapter Notes

Listened to Etude in D-Sharp Minor, Op. 8 No. 12 Remastered and Time is Running out by Muse while writing this. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will leaves the therapy office disoriented, wondering if he should contact his neurologist again. It's been a while since the last time he saw Hobbs' cadaver mounted on some corner of the room, dutifully spilling blood from his post as he is prone to.

His distended milky eyes bore into Will, both sightless with cataracts and somehow accusingly pointed in the living man's direction. Hobbs' mouth unhinges itself, maggots pulsing around the gums of his rotten teeth.

While Hobbs' presence is alarming, the shrill noise echoing the room frightens Will more. It's deafening, and sounds akin to several human screams overlapping like burlap to create one conglomerate wail. Cracks form along the walls and windows, Hobbs' corpse laughing hysterically from his corner as Will fumbles to distinguish the axis between reality and insanity.

"What was that?" Will asks, not expecting an answer.

Will doesn't hear whatever Hannibal says after that, and can't recall even exchanging goodbyes with his psychiatrist. He grows distracted, unaware of Dr. Lecter's predicament. A rumor of that haunting call follows Will all the way home, looming like the dark storm clouds over the black ribs of trees passing him by on his drive to Wolf Trap.

Eventually he spots the eggshell colored wood of his house from the distance. It gleams like a pale boat against the sea of trees. Will can still see Hobbs rotting in the backseat from the rearview mirror. He ignores him and gets out of his car. His steps are heavy, but he manages to slot his key in on the first try despite his trembling fingers.

Will trudges past the doorway like an injured animal attempting to enter a burrow to make its death bed. He sits at the foot of his bed, staring blankly into the bloated darkness until he finally falls into a disturbed sleep, comforted only by the sound of his breathing dogs.

…

Hannibal's reflection carefully touches the drying blood around his cranium. He dabs at the twin wounds with a wet cloth, watching as the rag blossoms from white to red and leaves smudges across his fringe.

The process of circling the small growth of antlers becomes methodical. Like most things in Hannibal’s life, he ascertains that wounds or issues be treated immediately. In the meanwhile that the blood clots and begins to crust, Hannibal takes to studying each and every ridge of his new appendages. They look healthy, spiky, and a modest 6 inches in height. Though he strongly suspects they'll get bigger, seeing as his head hasn't stopped throbbing.

The antlers aren't the only physical addition, Hannibal notices. His finger nails have grown a little longer and hard, the ends a black color as if dipped in melted obsidian. And when Hannibal parts open his shirt, he finds the hair on his chest has grown coarser and more plentiful from his chest to his abdomen and lower.

Staring into his reflection, Hannibal is reminded of archaic beasts or ghosts from ancient folklore. *I look like something that goes nameless only because people fear speaking it into existence.*

Despite his previous alarm, Hannibal comes to the conclusion that divinity has granted him a visual marker reflective of his upbringing and personhood. And who is he to deny the gods?

…

Will ascribes the smell of decaying flesh to the far wall at the end of a dark corridor. Even from this distance he can see a human foot peaking out from around the corner. Will doesn't take long to piece together what happened here.

I chase him down the corridor. He is scared, wailing as he loses blood from a deep wound I seared into him.

It's his comeuppance.

Will's eyes trace the swaying tracks of blood smeared across the walls, passing over shattered wedding photos and framed trips from Italy. The woman in them has pursed lips, giving away the photos' false candidness. Her arm is pale at the spots where her husband grips in a tense side-hug. Will eventually reaches the end of the gore-filled corridor and finds Mr. Marlow flat on his back just around the hallway bend.

Or what remains of him.

Mr. Marlow's exposed glistening ribs greet Will like an opening flower, the remnants of viscera and tripe peeking out from its hollow cave. The smell is pungent and has Will's stomach performing somersaults. He shivers as he thinks in the killer's waspish tone, cold and all encompassing in its sorrow. But underlined by a sense of duty. Something inevitable. And just as fluid as it is solidifying.

I ripped out his organs and devoured them, listening in on his screams of agony.

Mr. Marlow's face remains intact despite the ravaged state of the rest of his body. Sightless eyes stare up at Will. Out of the periphery of his vision, Will can spot another pair oxymoronically looking at him from the corner.

"*She's consumed most of him. Lovely. Though I disagree with the waste of bones,"* Hobbs says. *"They can still be used as joints for a lamp shade. Now's your chance, Will. Take."*

Will ignores him and bends down to study the scratch marks across what little is left of Mr. Marlow's body. The scars are too deep and ragged to have come from any regular nailbed.

Will stands up, the truth of what's happened coming up to bite. It is rare a killer feel such deep guilt. But beneath that he senses something far more ardent. *Instinct* .

Will stumbles in his haste to go back out the front door, finding Jack looking at him expectantly.

The front yard is bustling with cops and the forensic squad, all previously on standby before Will's emergence from inside. They rush in once Will's made his appearance, giving him wary side glances as they pass by. As if he's demented for stomaching what lies inside.

Just barely, Will wants to retort.

"More than enough." Hobbs laughs . A chunk of flesh falls from his cheek.

Will rubs at his eyes, attempting to abate the incoming nausea and the rise of his breakfast. He sighs as the feeling passes, coming into awareness of Jack's hovering presence.

"You alright?" Jack asks. Will can tell he means his concern, but that the case takes precedence.

Will ignores the question, dodging redundancy in the amount of '*I'm fine's*' he typically doles out in a day.

"Where's Mrs. Marlow?" Will asks, thinking of the feeble and scared looking woman who they interviewed earlier. Will wonders if she even remembers doing it, and doubts it. "Mr.

Marlow might have only sated her hunger for now. I hear B.H.D. symptoms can be triggered in bursts. And she's particularly carnivorous despite her demeanor." Will recalls her scared wide eyes. "Then again, I don't know if she'll kill again. Instinct or not. His death was necessary in her eyes. Mr. Marlow wasn't a very good husband."

Jack's eyes widen in faint surprise but he nods curtly before quickly calling someone on his phone to give orders to. He eventually turns around and claps Will on the shoulder. "Good job, Will."

Will stares emptily towards the yellow lines of police tape. The crowds at the other side of it look overly curious and teeter with energy with every wave of new onlookers that arrives. As each new face replaces another, Will realizes he is searching for someone in particular among the throng. Someone resolutely not there.

"Is Dr. Lecter here?" Will asks anyway, already sensing the vacancy of Hannibal's presence.

"No, I invited him but he seemed predisposed." Jack gives Will a sidelong stare. His brown eyes seem to fall in the direction of Will's chest before bouncing back up to Will's straying eyes. Will wonders what Jack has observed in him. "I can call him again if you're not feeling well."

A veil of trepidation falls over Will. "I'm fine," Will assures even as breathing begins to feel a little too tight of an endeavor to pull off.

Jack starts to look uncomfortable, awkwardly gazing at Will and then out to the crowds again only to repeat the same process.

"What," Will bites out. His teeth ache with a need to sink themselves into something.

"I can hear your heart beating loudly. And sense your stress. Go home, Will."

Jack's pupils become horizontally slanted for a split second before returning to a plain circle shape once more. He leaves Will dumbfounded by the doorway.

…

Against Jack's request, and Will's better judgment, Will finds himself driving past Baltimore's affluent sets of colonial brick and tailored roofs. He reaches Hannibal's office, suddenly nervous as it comes into view, just coming to the realization of where he ended up at.

Unfortunately and fortunately for him, no one answers his knocks at the office. Will squints in confusion, certain that Hannibal works by this hour on Tuesdays. He nearly kicks himself, realizing Hannibal is probably attending one of his patients. Will waits for an hour.

After the second hour Will lifts himself from the waiting room chair and leaves. Feeling hollow, not unlike Mr. Marlow's ribcage.

…

The days go by. Will stares at the bright phone contact. He's never told Hannibal that he's the only one listed as an emergency contact. That not even Bill Graham warrants or would want the title. That Hannibal is one of a total of five contacts on Will's alphabetically ordered call log.

Alana.

Dad.

Dog Groomer's.

Jack.

Hannibal.

Most people consider calling friends an easy ordeal. But where do Hannibal and Will fall on the doctor-patient-to-friend spectrum? When Will met the empty office the past Tuesday he couldn't bring himself to click the phone icon. But he stares at it obsessively anyway. Hobbs stubbornly decomposes beside him.

Will makes the drive to the office again on Thursday, certain the good Dr. Lecter won't miss an appointment.

He's not there that week. And no amount of refreshing shows any missed calls from his contact name either. Will gives it another go the Thursday after. When Will is met with another empty office he fights the childish urge to scuff his foot against the door.

" *I've never seen you this restless* ," Hobbs grouses. " *Pacing like an abandoned pet that's forgotten he's a* ***beast*** ."

Will turns his pointed eyes on Hobbs.

Half of Hobbs' face is down to just tissue, flesh curling where it meets the parts further along in decomposition. The sound of heavy breathing filters through what's left of Hobbs' teeth. Will unknowingly matches the ghost's rhythm. His world begins to spin as his chest heaves harder.

Will's heart bangs at his ribcage, sound echoing all the way to his ears. It creeps in slowly, matching his heart's tempo; the sound of something dying. It screams and claws at Will's ears, making him dizzier as bouncing colors enter his darkening periphery.

" *Sound familiar* ?" Hobbs asks. His eyes look at something past Will.

"Will," says a familiar voice.

As Will's vision clouds he thinks he makes out the sight of reflective sanguine eyes mirroring dim hallway lights.

…

Will wakes in an unfamiliar guest room. He slowly slides off the bed, surprised by the feeling of his bare feet landing on cold wooden floorboards. He wriggles his toes and shivers on cue, alarmed by just how freezing the temperature is despite his reside in an indoor room.

Will finds his shoes and socks beside the bed and pulls them on. He walks out into an unfamiliar hallway, blindly following the sound of a harpsichord flowing from down the hall. He eventually reaches the room the music comes from and reaches around until he feels the doorway ledge.

"Why are you playing in the dark?" Will asks the void. His breath is visible to the other person in the room.

The tune slows to a stop. Will can't make out anything in the shadows.

"Will," Hannibal's voice calls from the stretch of black space.

Will smiles slightly despite the strange circumstances. He adds wryly, "I guess the better question is *how*. Memorized the keys to play, have you? Who are you trying to impress?"

Hannibal is silent for a moment. "You suffered a mild seizure Will. Something told me I should stop by the office today. I'm glad I did." Will hears the sound of fabric rustling and a chair creaking as Hannibal undoubtedly stands. "How are you feeling?"

Will frowns at the obvious dodging of his questions. "I'm fine. Not hallucinating at this moment, am I? Right?"

Will hears Hannibal’s snort. He can imagine the faint amused pull of the Dr.'s lips.

"No, I'm quite certain I am here."

"Where have you been?" Will asks, trying not to sound a little too much like someone's flayed open an old wound. "You missed two appointments."

"'And I missed you,'" Hobbs mocks behind Will like a sneering older sibling.

"I apologize for my absence. I've been terribly rude, forgive me Will."

Will hears the sound of footsteps begin their steady footfalls in his direction. Will's heartbeat spikes for some unknown reason.

"I'm sure you had your reasons." Will sighs gently, as the tight knot which formed in his throat the past week finally begins to unravel.

"I wasn't sure how to face you."

Will squints through the dark, thinking he can see the faintest sign of movement as his vision does its best to adjust.

A pale hand brushes a curtain aside to let the moonlight in.

Will blinks rapidly, stepping properly into the room as he finally begins to make out the outline of a familiar shoulder. "Have you…grown taller?" He asks incredulously. But that

can't be right.

Hannibal is silent again. Will frowns as a leather shoe steps into the moonlight, followed soon by a pantsuit.

Will's eyes widen, unsure that what he is seeing is correct.

There in the pale midnight glow stands an antlered beast.

Chapter End Notes

Will's codependency on Hannibal is something I love seeing explored in fics. It fueled the first season even when they were still friends(no doubt because Hannibal fostered things that way) but it remains lovely nonetheless. Granted, it's a very mutual thing.

Hobbs wont be here for too long after this, so bare with me for now. In this AU Will already had encephalitis but occasionally still exhibits a few symptoms as is normal for some people who have gone through it.

Birth of Instinct

Chapter Summary

Strange instincts.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for my lateness I went on vacation for a few days.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will can say with certainty that Hannibal *has* grown taller. The shock of white antlers sprouting from the top of Hannibal's head look like boquetes of pale rib bones. For a moment, Will imagines Hannibal as a skeletal deep blue figure with milky white eyes, the visual implication of a deeply hungry creature he once read about in a book about North American Native culture. But the moment passes, and Hannibal still retains the overall body-shape and face of the friend Will has come to know.

Will doesn't know what to say, whether he should offer reassurance or simply pretend nothing has changed (when it's obvious things have). He settles for pointing out the facts. Something Will often inclines towards to keep his feet planted on logic.

"Seems you're the one who's transfigured this time," Will says, blinking rapidly as he runs his eyes over Hannibal.

Hannibal pauses, staring at Will with his head twisted in a manner reflective of his cervidae nature. He smiles, and finally says, "Transfiguration and mutations are at the bypass of psychology. The physical probes perception, which then probes our deep thought and self-image."

"That's too esoteric a sentence for 3 o'clock in the morning." Will's breath pitches into a snort.

"I do find myself becoming more idealistic these days." Hannibal's pupils flicker between slanted and circular. "You're shivering."

"Well. It feels like something below zero here," Will exaggerates. His fingers wiggle by his sides. He feels like reaching out, but not sure for what. "Why is it so cold?"

"Probably something to do with my new biology. I prefer a cooler environment and have promptly turned off the house furnace. My apologies, I'll grab you a coat. Would you like some late night desert?"

"It'd be more like an early breakfast." Will flushes as his stomach growls loudly. The nerves in his teeth itch. "Yes, please."

…

Will tucks himself deeper into the thick coat Hannibal leant him, resisting the urge to smell deeply at the scent of amber and saffron embedded in the collar. The coat is bigger than Will expected, seeing as the men weren't that much different in size previous to Hannibal's change. He feels like a child trying on his parent's clothes. Will realizes then that it's likely new, tailored for the grown width of Hannibal's shoulders. He doesn't know what to think about that.

"Lemongrass and Rhubarb cheesecake," Hannibal says as he sets the plates down.

"Already settled into a pasture-based diet?" Will asks as he picks up a spoon.

"Lemongrass is an herb." Hannibal chuckles. "Unlike other individuals with B.H.D, my diet hasn't changed. I am as carnivorous as I was before." He looks up at Will then, eyes amused with an inside joke Will does not understand.

Will shovels the cake with his spoon, moaning at the taste.

…

Jack eyes Will as the latter steps into the office a little later that day. The older man looks puzzled at first, then settles into something like suspicion.

"What?" Will asks.

Jack doesn't say anything. He turns around to look at the board (lined with fresh crime scene photos) and then stares back at Will again. Will can sense Jack is conflicted between talking about their latest case and something else. Before Jack can say anything, the science trio(as dubbed by everyone in their department) shuffles their way noisily inside.

"I'm telling you, I've gotten bigger!" Zeller brandishes his stack of papers in a pantomime of growing largeness.

"Epidemics only foster wishful thinking, it seems," Price adds wryly. His new pair of capybara ears twitch at the top of his head.

"And inflated egos about supposedly better sex activity. At least according to certain people." Beverly quips as she looks at Zeller. "You don't have B.H.D."

"I could," Zeller insists in the manner of men who wear tin foil hats.

"Have you brought the docs?" Jack intones tiredly.

"Yes," Price says.

They're pinned to the board along with a fresh set of pictures. They all lean in for a closer look.

"She's escalating. There’s fur on the bannister and tufts stuck between floorboard cracks." Will observes. He tries not to think about his ill-timed assertion some time ago that Amy Marlow wouldn't kill again. *Her psychology has completely changed* , Will thinks with a frown.

'Why so surprised? You change a lot too.' Hobbs stares forthrightly, now without eyelids.

"Type C and A symptoms combined are a dangerous concoction coming from the predator class." Jack narrows his eyes at the photograph of the decomposing remains of Stella Daney. Beside it, a crime report about three counts of child abuse with Stella's name written in the headline.

"Fascinating isn't it?" Price says. "As the epidemic branches out, new subtypes are created. Mrs. Marlow is still technically only Type C, as her Type A symptoms only pop up in timely bursts."

"Timed with what?" Jack asks.

"Whenever she spots an abuser." Will says, mind etched with Amy Marlow's sadness. "She can't control it."

"A bit like a werewolf, her transformation pattern." Brian leans against a desk.

"That's one way to put it." Will sighs. "How did she escape detainment?"

Jack's face looks glum. "She had help. Freddie Lounds posted an article about Mrs. Marlow's rocky marriage. A sympathetic guard looked the other way as she rampaged her way out of her restraints after seeing Stella Delaney's mugshot on TV. Camera footage shows that she only really developed claws during that phase."

"It's so she could pass as human," Beverly theorizes. "But these new photos have loose fur all over the crime scene, like Will said."

"Her body and state of mind are intertwined." Will thought of Hannibal's previous words. "The more she kills the more-" Will pauses, something sour foiling in his mouth. He knows what it's like to be seen as a rabid thing. "-animalistic she becomes. She was able to track Stella with just a picture of her. Amy Marlow is a primal hunter."

…

Alana Bloom purses her lips in a pretty manner. Will thinks she looks like a doll, sat there by the blue mental hospital bed dressed in red and black. Bold colors fitting of a stubborn woman.

"You can't leave yet, Abigail," Alana says softly.

Abigail chews her inner cheek and looks at Will then. The scales at the side of her cheeks gleam iridescently in the gray-daylight. Hobbs' corpse admires her from his corner of the room.

"Please," Abigail probes, as if knowing that Will struggles to deny her anything.

'Of course she knows ,' Hobbs murmurs. *'I taught her to rely on the biggest hunter in the room, in my absence.'*

"You're safer here where people can keep an eye on you," Alana chirps, patting Abigail's shoulder.

Will recalls reading about peahen. The female counterpart to the well known peacock. Territorial, motherly, and fiercely protective. Alana fit the bill even prior to her transformation. She moves elegantly, and speaks with a confident diction. Will can't help admiring her. As if sensing his thoughts, Alana catches his eye. She ducks her head slightly and turns her talking eyes at Abigail.

"We can go on a walk," Will offers Abigail.

Abigail's blue eyes flash with disappointment. Her pupils widen vertically. A reptile's anger. She nods anyway, standing up to follow the adults out towards the hospital garden.

They walk past a couple of trailing patients, Will notes that one of the other girls closely resembles Abigail. His fingers web out by his side as he stares at the pale stretch of the girl's neck, imagining himself snapping it. Hobbs laughs in his ear.

…

Will wakes at midnight to the sound of wind. He looks at the clock and notes he only got two hours of sleep. Feeling temporally misaligned, Will stares at the ceiling for a few beats, content to look into nothingness and flow along with it, until he finally, grudgingly, begins to get up. The dogs howl beside Will, nudging at his legs as he removes the covers.

"What?" Will grouses as he blinks the sleep from his eyes. The bleary vision of Winston barks and leads the way into the hall.

Will follows him out, sighing as he grabs a coat in preparation of stepping outside to let Winston do his business. He halts as he steps into something damp and squishy. Will looks down and finds muddy footstep tracks are sporadically spread over the floorboards. The air is glacier cold, making Will shiver as he looks at the mess of dirt marks scattered all over the walls as well. The front door is wide open, letting in a whistling draft.

"Hey?" Will yells, now wide awake. "Anyone there?"

The wind picks up, springing into a long, wretched hymn. Will winces at the sound. He covers his ears but the noise only gets louder. It ricochets in the chambers of his ears, everlasting and increasing in strength. His heartbeat rises up to meet it, pounding like a caged animal asking to be let out. Will stumbles towards the door and pushes it closed, sighing as the noise is quelled with the barrier. He pants as he leans his burning forehead into the door, deeply confused.

…

"I've been sleepwalking," Will says in lieu of an introduction.

Hannibal steps aside to let him in. Will strides inside. He looks around the room, pacing restlessly as he throws his bag onto the chaise. Tension follows the line of his spine, curving as he prowls around the area. Hannibal grows completely still, observing Will inquisitively.

Will turns to face Hannibal, furrowed eyebrows softening in surprise.

"Oh. They've gotten bigger."

Hannibal blinks, confused by the turn of conversation. He soon realizes what Will means and only nods, "I take it you're talking about my antlers."

"Yeah," Will says, finding himself a little dumbfounded by their sheer size and prominent position at Hannibal's head. "How do you fit through the door?"

"I bend. An awkward endeavor, but necessary one until architecture everywhere gets remodeled to accommodate the changes brought on by the epidemic. This office was already fairly spacious, thankfully."

"Oh," Will says dumbfoundedly, directionless, just as he is prone to talk around the other man whenever he notices each change these days. He steps closer to Hannibal. He tries to think of something to say but draws up blank. Will purses his lips, sniffs through the congestion in his nose, and turns away with two nods.

Hannibal politely gestures at the office chairs. Will looks over and sits down.

"You mentioned that you're sleep walking again?" Hannibal unbuttons the lapels of his new blazer and crosses one leg over the other as he settles in his chair.

"Yes, I woke up to the sound of my dogs howling. The door was open. There were mud tracks everywhere. Strangely enough, my feet were clean, and clothes freshly changed."

"Your consciousness was aware enough to offer the forethought."

"But not any memory."

"Could you track where you went in the morning?"

"Only far enough to know that I went into the woods somewhere. I didn't care enough to keep following the trail. This is the fourth time this week."

"You're getting used to it," Hannibal notes. "Tired, but completely expectant of it. Like watching nature follow its course. The sleepwalking isn't what bothers you anymore." Hannibal leans his hands forwards. "What really itches on your mind this time, Will?"

"There was…" Will looks at something that's not quite Hannibal's eyes. He traces a wrinkle along the other man's forehead, etching his gaze along a long european nose and then lips. Will flicks his gaze elsewhere. "A noise. Horrible noise. I've been hearing it more and more recently. Makes me feel like gauging out my ears if only to make it stop."

Hannibal leans back in his chair, inclining his head. "What does it sound like?"

"Something dying." Will takes a breath, suffering it out in a long drag like he would for a cigarette. "But then the moment passes. And behind that, I find myself wanting to see it through. Chase it."

Will eases back into his chair, crossing his legs, unaware that he mirrors Hannibal. Hannibal's lips twitch.

"The next time you hear it, I suggest you call out to it. See what happens." Hannibal opens his notebook and begins to scribble something down. "I can prescribe something for your poor sleep. But I think we'll need more time to see what to do about these auditory hallucinations."

"They don't sound like hallucinations. I know what actual hallucinations are like." Will's eyes shoot to Hobbs who lays on the floor and then back up. "This isn't it. It's-"

"An imperative call? That which we can only answer through movement. Let loose and resonate with it through base incentive."

Will frowns at the crystalyzing picture Hannibal paints. He sees himself in the portrait, hungry, and hunting. "You're making me sound like an animal." Bitterness lines the hem of Will's words. *You're supposed to be different,* says Will's face.

Hannibal's eyes seem to gleam. "You successfully came out as fully human in your B.H.D. exam, didn't you?"

"Yes. To the surprise of everyone." Will snorts. "Everyone acts like I'm on the verge of some sort of beastial precipice."

"Why do you think that is?"

"I don't know. My mental instability, probably. But being an outlier is nothing new. Even in this."

"No, not for you." Hannibal looks thoughtful as he says that. "An approaching half of the population already has it as of this week. Soon, most will be changed."

Will stands up to pace around again. He rubs his fingertips along a bookshelf, coming to stand by the ladder case. He looks up, wondering if he should climb into the second floor. Will looks back at Hannibal, wrist resting unsurely on one of the ladder rungs.

"I kissed Alana Bloom, the other day." Will says it blankly. Casually. Like speaking about the weather. "She said I was too unstable. That we wouldn't be good for each other."

Outside, the first winter's snow begins to fall. The flakes of snow twirl in the air as they bat at the window panes.

Will finds it strange that the psychiatrist has gone quiet. He rubs at the gruff side of his beard, blinking owishly at Hannibal as he waits for a response.

The movement happens quickly in the lapse of Will blinking and the sound of swift floorboard creaking under an elk's weight. Hannibal is suddenly near him, standing in front of him.

Then the smell hits Will. Amber and saffron, mixed with sweat. It is a lot thicker than the last time Will smelled it, flirting into something sweet and appetizing.

Hannibal leans forward, crowding Will against the ladder. Will stares up at him warily, trying to understand what is happening. Hannibal's pupils are currently slanted, maroon irises shining like reflective waters. Up close, Will can truly ascertain their difference in size now, forced to look up at Hannibal. Will continues to stare unwaveringly, refusing to back down from whatever this is.

Hannibal makes some sort of clicking sound from the back of his throat. Will frowns, but does not move his eyes off him. Then Hannibal bends his neck down into Will's, rubbing against it.

What the hell? Will leans away with uncertainty, confused by Hannibal's sudden actions. He releases a breath after a pregnant silence, brain throbbing somewhere at his frontal lobe.

Hannibal seems to take this as invitation, clustering himself impossibly deeper. Will feels claustrophobic, anxious as the other man prevents him from breathing in properly as he's pressed against the ladder. Strangely enough-

'It's not the proximity that you mind ,' Hobbs mutters as the last of his flesh falls away and he disappears from the room.

Will attempts pressing his palms against Hannibal's chest to lean him away. But Hannibal's frame is more solid than steel, unrelenting to Will's gentle nudging.

"Hannibal?" Will raises a questioning brow. It is clear the other man is lost to some sort of new instinctive behavior. Will tries tapping him to attempt bringing Hannibal back to his senses. Hannibal only zeroes his body closer, nose sniffing and rubbing at Will's jaw.

Will blinks up at the ceiling, unsure of what to do. "Hannibal I can't-"

Breathe, he wants to say. But it's not just that. This breech of space is alarming every sense of Will's body, sending shivers down his spine and in places Will hadn’t thought had nerves.

An idea enters his mind, imagery provided by Will's eidetic memory along with his experience handling animals in the bayous and forests of the places he's lived. He thinks of Amy Marlow, and swiftly slithers into her mentality.

Will slowly crawls back up a few ladder rungs up, giving himself more height, but never once trails his eyes away from Hannibal's. Hannibal sniffs, attempts to follow him up, arms caging Will's middle on the ladder. Will uses his new leverage and pounces forward, knocking the air off Hannibal and sending them both to the floor.

Will shifts on top of Hannibal's chest, throwing his hands forward to grab hold of Hannibal's antlers. Hannibal’s face flushes at the contact, turning his head, trying to shake Will's hands off. Will struggles with him, trying to keep Hannibal still. Hunger pools at Will's stomach,

teeth itching again. Around him the air feels colder, the alarming howl of something dying echoing in the room around them.

"...Will?" Hannibal's circular pupils gaze up at Will, confused. Enraptured.

Will rips uncontrollably at Hannibal’s collar. He shoots his head down, biting hard into Hannibal’s neck. He shakes his head, sinking his teeth into as much as he can. Hannibal stiffens beneath him, like prey accepting its fate, stifling only a sigh at the contact before his eyes fall closed in acceptance.

With the weeks-worth urge to sink his teeth into something finally sated, Will dislodges himself, finally coming back to his senses. He stares down at Hannibal’s limp figure in alarm and scrambles away.

"Hannibal?" Will whispers.

Hannibal shifts up, making Will only somewhat relieved until he catches sight of the horrid bites carved into the other man's neck. *Fuck* , Will thinks as he stands up. *I just assaulted-*

Hannibal only reaches his hand into his neck, feeling the bruising and raised skin surrounding it until he pulls his hand away to gaze at his bloody hand. He looks up at Will, there is no accusation in his eyes, only the emotion of a new discovery reflected there.

"Will it's alright-"

Will doesn't hear the end. He rushes out of the office, scared and angry at himself.

Hobbs voice calls out everywhere Will goes, from the trees and the wind, to the sky, and the moon; one word. *Predator* .

Chapter End Notes

Notice that Will is the only one who calls Amy Marlow by her full name and hesitates to say anything that might potentially demonize her. Something I appreciated in the show was how he deeply humanized and sympathized with victims, even those who eventually became killers.

Watched a few videos of wolves attacking elk. Haha whoever mentioned that last chapter in the comments isn't completely off at all.

Also bear with me on the minor Alana/Will that won't last much longer either. I mean, clearly Hannibal wouldn’t let it happen either here haha.

Growing Instinct

Chapter Summary

Will's instincts grow a little stronger.

Chapter Notes

Jeepers sorry for the late update. I kept editing and rewriting this chapter.

[Some Time Ago]

Frenzied tendencies , Hannibal thinks, caught between a smile and a grimace. It's not wise to let Will have this much power over him. That's not part of the plan.

It's easy to plan his purposeful stay away from Will for two weeks, aiming to foster a sensation of a missing limb in the man who has no clue Hannibal has rewired his brain to expect him in every corner of his life.

Hannibal made call appointments with all his other patients except Will. Wanting to see how long it takes before Will cracks. But here crawls out a new set of issues from their hiding spot.

Will never calls. Things go on as usual. And Hannibal is the one left feeling like he's lost an integral organ.

As the second week flies in, Hannibal finds himself wanting to sneak out at night to…to do what exactly?

Call . He wants to call out to Will.

Hannibal's heart hammers, throat cinches. He speeds through traffic, not knowing why he does it, only sensing that he *has* to be there at the office.

When he finds Will convulsing by the office door it takes everything in Hannibal not to shout in glee. He sees about handling Will with his medical knowledge until the latter passes into slumber.

Will looks lovely in the guest room bed back at Hannibal's house, all flushed cheeks and bronze curls, face framed with the masculine edge of a jawline Hannibal wants to lick. Hannibal explores Will with his eyes first. And then again with his doctorly hands, touching only what is medically necessary but delighting in contact all the same.

Will's later reaction to Hannibal's new transformation is what seals the deal for him.

Obsessed , says what sounds like Bedelia's voice at the back of Hannibal's mind.

…

[Present]

Hannibal gathers himself up to a stand, staring between the bloody handkerchief he uses to wipe his neck and the doorway Will left ajar. He thinks about the moment before Will tried tearing his neck apart, that breathless instant where Hannibal doesn't know whether he'll survive what comes next.

Years of culling society's pigs seemingly culminates to nothing but bare husks of knife skills and unemployed physical strength Hannibal has no intention of hiring in the face of Will's hunger. This unsettles Hannibal, who learned to put his survival above everything from an early age.

Hannibal has always had a cornucopia of gentling words, words which massage and pat everyone around him into defenselessness. It's a skill his aunt Murasaki taught him, and one he employs everywhere he goes. The charm and smile takes little effort from him now at this age. His mouth forms pleasantries like second instinct. But lately there's been that vocal *itch* . A sort of thing he can't control.

The itch starts at the top of his head. Descends down to his throat, and settles at the back of his mouth, creating an intense pressure so as to beg release in the places where everything has been polished with manners and decorum. Hannibal wants to see a dent in the perfect picture. Particularly Will's.

That's when it happens. The bugling at the office. The bugling at twilight. Sliding off Hannibal’s tongue and spilling into the air where all screams gather to create atmosphere. Wherever Will goes Hannibal wants to follow, to attract him with his call, to scent mark him, and claim him in the most primal way. But Will's yet to answer and Hannibal grows weary.

But *this* -Hannibal reluctantly bandages his neck, finger outlining a blossoming blood stain- is *new* .

Hannibal had gone limp, lost to the sensation of wanting to hang from Will's mouth like Judas did from a tree for his messiah.

Will is only human , Hannibal reminds himself. But he still fantasizes.

..

I hurt him.

I hurt him.

I hurt-

His red eyes. The smoothness of ridges and grooves throughout the pair of antlers. And that throat-

That deliciously *sensitive* throat-

Frost blooms across the windows. The road is pitch black. Will tries scrubbing off Amy's instincts like she's a stubborn stain on an aluminum pan. Nothing works. The pendulum swings, and all Will can see is his eventful mistake repeated over and over behind his eyes. A chunk of his stomach feels like it's trying to eat itself. Will grips at his side, the knuckles on his other hand turning white as he grips the wheel as Will pants through the pain.

' *Finish what you started',* says a feminine waspish voice that is decidedly not Hobbs.

Will startles, staring into an empty highway. *Fuck* . He gets out of the car and looks around, wondering how he got there.

He settles back in the car and continues forward until he sees a sign telling him where he is. As he drives back to Wolf Trap he relents that at least Hobbs is nowhere to be seen.

Will gets to work the next day, scavenging through the woods around his house for the perfect spot. The perfect spot for what exactly, he’s not sure. But he’ll know it when he finds it.

…

Passing the weekend, Monday creeps around dressed in its dreary grey clouds. Will wakes at the sound of tires rolling into his driveway. He grumpily dredges his way up to the window, weighing the belly of his wrist on one of the blinds to peek through into the outside.

The sight of the familiar black Bentley ties Will's stomach into a knot. But then his trepidation shifts to surprise when not one, but two figures emerge from the car in their winter coats. Alana and Hannibal.

Will chews on his lip, thinking about what prompts those two to come in *one* car together so early in the morning. He tamps down the sudden bitterness sliding up his throat and doesn't bother trying to rush to put on pants as he hears the doorbell ring.

Will creaks the door open, unable to stop his morning grimace from stapling itself to his face. (Though he knows deep inside it's not the morning that's made him sour.)

"Will, sorry to disturb you so early." Alana greets. Her cheeks are flushed prettily from the scratch of the winter wind. Will nods at her then makes the mistake of looking over at Hannibal. It's the slightest glimpse, but it does its damage. Will's mind slips through immediately, noting that Hannibal's face looks uncharacteristically malcontent behind his poker faced veneer.

Memories of last Thursday dunk over Will like an ice bucket. He spots a wrapped bandage over Hannibal's neck, accusingly white as it peaks over the older man's collar like a shy child behind their parent. Will grows nervous, avoiding Hannibal's eyes as he begins to worry Hannibal has finally come to his senses and is here to deliver a restraining order. He has every right to. But it'd hurt more to be seen as an uncouth monster by one of Will's few friends than to receive that little slip of paper.

There's an awkward pause where Will becomes hyper aware of his underdressed state. Maybe he should have at least put on a robe.

"Here to check on the wayward man?" Will drawls, sarcastic even in the face of his guilt. His fingernails dig into the aged door ledge he holds onto, causing splinters to spike.

"More like searching for a wayward girl, as it happens." Hannibal chips, eyes flowing to Will's hand and then back to the man himself. "Abigail has gone missing."

Will frowns. "What?"

“She was last seen at a bus stop yesterday evening. The only route that goes through there happens to stop by Wolf Trap.” Alana looks concerned. “Judging by your reaction, I’m guessing she hasn’t stopped by here.”

Will shakes his head, now worried for a different reason. He rushes inside to get dressed, ignoring Alana and Hannibal who step a few feet past the doorway and look around at the sorry state of the house. There’s scraps of dry wood and a halfway fixed vacuum along with its spare parts littered on the floorboards beside Will’s bed. Dogs scuttle around, barking softly and asking for pets from Will’s unwanted guests.

Just as Will finally finds his right foot’s shoe, the sound of creaking comes from upstairs. All three adults arch their necks up at the ceiling in unison.

“Who-” Alana cuts herself off to exchange glances with Hannibal.

“I don’t-” Will says. His shoulders grow tense. He suddenly doesn’t want to let anyone pass him to the staircase.

'Protect your daughter,' says a disembodied voice.

“I didn’t notice anyone breaking in.”

“It wouldn’t be hard, not if you’re taking what I prescribed.” Hannibal lifts an orange capsule full of sleeping pills off the bed stand on cue. Will frowns. Hannibal tilts his head inquisitively.

“Abigail,” Alana calls as she attempts to look over Will's shoulder. There is a pause, fashioned by Will who solidly blocks the staircase without really knowing why. Hannibal and Alana raise questioning looks, and it’s only then that Will swallows the urge to *scratch* and allows the brunette to climb up the stairs in a hurry. The pair of men slowly follow after her. Will ignores the feeling of Hannibal’s stare loaded over him.

The guest room looks empty at first glance, plain in its misuse. The other two adults look around the room in confusion while Will drops down on his knees beside the bed and takes a peak underneath. Curled up in a wad of blankets, is Abigail, asleep and burrowed almost seamlessly into her makeshift nest. Will's lips twitch in a small smile, interrupted only by Alana's words which bring him crashing down into reality.

"Abigail, what on earth are you doing here?" Alana whispers, gently reaching in to nudge Abigail awake.

Abigail's eyes snap open in alarm, her forked tongue coming out as her mouth releases a low hissing noise. Alana makes a strange set of clicking croons, trying to sooth the riled up snake-girl.

"Why don't you come out here, Abigail-" Will struggles to think of what might rouse a teenage girl from her hiding spot. Especially one glaring at him so suspiciously. "-er, -Hannibal's making breakfast for all of us."

He finally looks over at Hannibal who stands by the doorway watching the whole ordeal with mild interest. Once having met Will's eye, Hannibal nods, ducks his head to avoid scratching the doorway with his antlers, and leaves the room. Will's mention of breakfast seems to dampen Abigail's hissing, her eyes changing from yellow to blue. She slowly crawls out, helped up to a standing position by both Will and Alana.

Abigail doesn't say much as she swiftly passes them by and descends down the staircase, unapologetically leaving Will and Alana to stew in their unanswered questions.

"Why did she reach your place and not mine or Hannibal's?" Alana asks rather directly.

Will thinks on that for a moment, trying not to feel the sting of the underlying implication. "Probably because I'm *not* you, or Hannibal. Better to run into the twitchy loner you're not too fond of on your planned escape trip than the social butterflies."

Alana stares for a moment and then lightly laughs at Will’s self-deprecating joke, making him a little relieved that he isn’t met with her usual pitying garb this time. “I don’t know if that’s entirely accurate.”

Will looks questioningly over at Alana who’s cheeks have gone strangely pink. “I don’t know how to say it. But I think even Jack has noticed.”

“Noticed what?” Will asks.

“I think Abigail wants back what she lost. And she sees that in *you* . You’ve been acting a little different, Will-”

“Haven’t heard that one before.” Will laughs dryly.

“I mean it,” Alana insists. “I know your blood samples qualify as fully human, but you might consider being tested in a different way-”

Will narrows his eyes, his smile disappearing as it falls into a thin line. Alana immediately quiets at that. They drop the subject, walking into the kitchen where Abigail and Hannibal greet them.

.

The breakfast goes on as awkwardly as one might expect, what with Alana's light scolding directed at Abigail, Hannibal’s impenetrable stare aimed at the side of Will's head, followed by Abigail's stubborn refusal to answer any of their questions regarding her escape plans, and Will's quiet but ill footed role in all this cusped by his uncertainty in why this should all be happening in his usually desolate kitchen. It feels a lot like someone's picked up an edgy iteration of *Barbie* , *Ken* , and *Kelly* and placed them next to a *Teddy and the Bear Mechanical Bank* toy. The perfect sitcom.

But the joke's too normal. Painting too nuclear a family.

Someone doesn't belong.

'A cuckoo in the nest.'

It's me .

But it doesn't have to be . Will fiddles with a napkin linen, tearing at the edges as his eyelids open and close rapidly in succession with a frown before looking up at Alana. His gaze flicks over to Hannibal, who steadily cuts into the breakfast with his usual amount of unnecessary ornamental flounce.

"Abigail, you ought to take more caution. It won't do for you to keep breaking into people's homes, much less running away. Especially when you're a suspected accessory to a crime," Hannibal says calmly after some time, without any bite. The voice of someone who doesn't quite care but who goes through the motions of it anyway.

'That won't do either, ' grouses Amy who digs a phantom finger behind Will's shoulder. *Tap tap tap* .

"I didn't break into a stranger's home, I broke into Will's." Abigail bites her inner cheek, looking more glum and taken aback by Hannibal's comment than by anything Alana has said thus far. Will feels strangely happy at her words.

"Going out by yourself isn't ideal." Will drags a sip of his morning coffee, closing his eyes in relief. "The next time you want to leave the hospital, just call me. I'll sign you out."

" *Will* ," Alana squeaks in astonishment.

Hannibal perks up at this, the only sign of his surprise. The corner of Abigail's lips twitch, her wide blue eyes singing with relief.

Later, as Alana chidingly leads Abigail into the Bentley, Hannibal lingers by the porch with the expectancy of someone who expects rain.

"Denial doesn't stop a child from getting what they want," Will says. "They'll only seek it out in secret, and in more dangerous ways. I'd hate to be caged the way Abigail is. Surrounded by metronome and somberhood. No one can heal in a place like that."

"Feeling paternal, Will?" Hannibal asks, a quiet intrigue in his eyes.

Will turns to stare at Hannibal, nodding slowly as he daringly reaches up and picks a piece of leaf off Hannibal's antlers before he can change his mind. His fingertips lightly graze the antler's grooves. Hannibal's nostrils flare slightly at that. "Aren't you?" Will asks breezily, unable to hide the flash of teeth in his attempt at a smile.

"Yes." Hannibal's eyes drift over to Abigail and then back to Will. "Though our friend Dr. Bloom has advised us not to take too personal an interest in Abigail's welfare."

"Abigail's lost more than just her family." Will steps closer, forcing his eyes on the bandage tucked beneath Hannibal's collar. "And I feel it's my- it's *our* responsibility…"

"To help her find her way," Hannibal finishes.

"Yeah," Will says airlessly, mind gliding like Amy's, into something far more instinctual. He leans forward, and grabs hold of Hannibal's wrist, interrupting the latter who's in the process of buttoning his winter coat.

It's a quick grabbing movement, but it's all the time Will needs to bite hard enough to draw blood.

Hannibal watches it all happen quietly, not even making a noise the moment teeth breeches skin, only sighing slightly at the feel of Will lapping slightly at the blood that pearls out of the bite mark. Will steps away, feeling satisfied in a way he hasn't the past few days since the last time he tried mauling Hannibal's neck in the therapy office.

"Sorry."

"Use your apologies sparingly."

…

"Mavis Cooper. Found dead in his car parked here by Riverview Elementary school. He was supposed to pick up his son, Nial," Jack says as they pass by an empty schoolyard.

"Nial Cooper is missing?" Will frowns as he glimpses inside a rushed report written by one of the trainees.

"Yes. The police in the area think it has something to do with the fact Mavis and his ex wife, Lauren, are fighting for custody. Don't have to fight if your opponent is dead. They think Lauren kidnapped her son and that a hired hit man killed Mavis Cooper."

"You don't think it has anything to do with Lauren." Will sees through it as they approach the chafed up red Chevrolet Impala.

There's a bloody Jackson Pollock smeared on the front and back windows. Amidst the struggling adult handprints there is a small one perfectly imprinted on the back window of the car. The back door is open, giving Will and Jack ample room to peek inside at the mess. Will struggles to make out exactly what he is looking at.

A long fleshy tail is left amidst a mess of ripped flesh, viscera, and broken bones. Bites from a pair of long front teeth scrape along the back seats. *A rat* .

A rat that was interrupted from having its meal.

Will feels the bile rise to his throat.

"Did you know rats sometimes cannibalize their young if they think they don't have enough nutrients," Will says slowly, hand reluctantly hovering near the gun holster at his hip. "Unluckily for Cooper, he was interrupted by a larger animal."

"Is it her?"

"It's her."

..

"Are we going to talk about it?" Will asks, despite not wanting to, himself.

"What is there to talk about?" Hannibal's eyes gleam, flashing light reflectively as is typical for animals with deer lineage. The eery glow seems to Will like the lighthouses which lead sailboats to harbors.

Will's eyes fall to the healed scar on Hannibal's neck that he's caught continuing glimpses of. It's still deeper than what he did on Monday. In fact, Monday's bite scar has completely disappeared from Hannibal's wrist. Flitting from existence as if having never been.

"Do you let your other patients mark you in a similar way?" ***In any way?*** Will screws his eyes in a questioning frown, the smile line by his mouth twitching. As if to laugh. As if to snarl.

"My sessions with my other patients are completely confidential, Will," Hannibal says, face revealing nothing.

Not a yes or a no . Will grunts, adjusting his jaw and tasting the bitter coffee he had that morning.

"I'm not your typical patient."

"You're not," Hannibal agrees on that. "It's almost as if we have a daughter together."

Will does his best to squash down the temptation to grin at that. He's been ensuring to acclimate the image of a caring father and daughter the past week every time he and Hannibal make their visits to Abigail's hospital. Aiming to replace Hannibal's previous disinterest with something else. As all this happens, Will notices Alana growing more stilted in interactions with him. She seems confused.

A part of Will still likes her. A part of Will values the euphoria he gets from biting Hannibal more. Eager for his next fix.

"Yes," Will replies blithely, scarcely believing Hannibal's admission.

A change of Pace

Chapter Summary

A pause in Mrs. Marlow's case. A sneak peek at another.

Chapter Notes

I'll be weaving some canon events into the fic. With my own twist to them as well as the convos off course.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A cry slices through the trees and spills out into the air, scaring an avalanche of crows into scampering off their perches. Their black shiny bodies look stark against the pale grey sky, like small inkblots splattering from an overfilled fountain pen. They chorus the first noise in waves, volume drooping with their swooping bodies as they circle the clearing Will walks in.

It is this sound which drags Will from sleep. Colors flog his blurry line of sight in bursts as it slowly adjusts to familiar but strange surroundings. It takes him several heavy breaths to realize he's somewhere in the middle of the woods, half naked, and shivering.

The soles of his feet are cold and bleeding, presumably from walking through whatever elements Will faced in his sleep. He slowly glances around to try and spot any familiar landmarks but doesn't find any.

Just as he's deciding which direction to test going in he hears another wail of agony somewhere nearby.

Will's feet are shooting off in its direction before his brain has caught up with what exactly it is he's hearing. The spiny grooves of the earth pricking at Will from beneath him don't matter as he chases instinct.

“ *Give into it* ,” what sounds like a familiar male voice says.

Will frowns as he comes to the edge of a narrow ravine. The sound of the temperamental gorge thrashes in his ears, but it doesn’t deter Will from stepping closer towards the eroded rocks near the bank. It’s there where the noise source that woke Will stares at him with a set of wide yellow eyes. Crushed between a set of logs and the grasping arms of the flowing water is a wolf.

…

A month passes by. The Marlow file has gone cold and sits at the bottom of a stack of papers back in Baltimore while the rest of the team flies to Jersey. Will tries not to be upset about having to leave it behind for the moment.

A rusted sign with shattered bulbs reads “The Welcome Inn” over a bungalow-style travel lodge that has equally seen better days,

Jack and Will move through the gauntlet of shell-shocked local police officers and F.B.I. agents milling about hopelessly around the coroner’s vans and the incessant flashing police car lights. Jack and Will dodge the molerat-man who makes quick work of stringing yellow tape around the premises.

“Room was registered to John Smith, along with every other room here,” Jack says.

“Appalling failure of imagination.” Will glances at the passing empty rooms.

“They paid with cash. No security cameras on the premises. The motel practically advertises it,” Jack says with disgust to the type of illegal activities he and Will can immediately guess occur here. Motels are where the god-fearing go to hide.

“John Smith, one of the victims?” Will asks.

“Mr. and Mrs. Anderson according to the register. Mutilated, displayed. Thought it might be the Chesapeake Ripper but no surgical trophies were taken.” Jack looks at Will as they arrive at what can only be *the* door. “I need you to prepare yourself.”

“I’m prepared.”

“Prepare yourself some more. It’s soup in there,” Jack warns.

“Soup isn’t good for the soul.” Will sniffs, already detecting something foul through the vaseline he rubbed under his nose. He doesn’t know why he bothers.

“Not this soup. No jurisdictional rivalry here. Local Police practically begged us to take it.”

Will’s mind starts to wander, suddenly hearing the clicking of hooves somewhere down the hall from where they came. He slowly shifts his head, His breaths get heavier. Hungrier.

“Will?”

The snapping of fingers pulls Will from his haze. He stares back at Jack.

“Where’s your head?” Jack chides.

“On my pillow. I didn’t sleep very well.” Will blinks away his stupor.

“Got just the thing to wake you up.” Jack pushes the door open.

Brian's flashing camera blinds them before revealing the scene ahead. Two bodies. One male, one female, kneeled on either side of the bed. Their back flesh has been cut down the middle, each side peeled back in large flaps which rise outstretched like wings towards the ceiling. Their wrists are raised in mock prayer.

Zeller photographs the dorsal wounds of the victims as Beverly navigates the fishing line to take samples from the crumpled bed sheets. Jimmy is dusting a batch of glasses on a small table for fingerprints. One is still full.

"Okay. I'm awake." Will sighs through his nose.

"Hooks were bored into the ceiling," Jack explains. "Fishing line was used to hold up the bodies and parts of bodies."

"Least we know he's a fisherman." Beverly passes Will.

And I will make you fishers of men , recalls Will.

"And or a Viking," adds Jimmy.

"Vikings do this?" Brian asks incredulously.

"Vikings do a lot of things. Discovered America 500 years before Columbus. Well, discovered Canada."

"Canada is America." Beverly pipes.

"Vikings would execute Christians by breaking their ribs and bending them back so they looked like wings. Then they'd rip out their lungs. Called it a Blood Eagle." Jimmy says excitedly. At least one of them clearly had eight hours of sleep,

“Pagans mocking the God Fearing,” Will glances upward as if he might spy God peeking down at them through the ceiling.

“Who’s mocking who here?” prods Jack curiously.

“He’s not mocking them. He’s transforming them.” Will feels suddenly ill footed. Something’s cracking. Molting.

“I don’t know if it was a good night’s sleep, but he slept here,” Beverly points out. “Hair on the pillow and the sheets are still damp. He’s a sweater.”

Seems they have several things in common. Will can sense he’s not the only one thinking the same. But something’s very different about this type of beast. It changes Will’s hunger into something more desperate. Survival.

“Madness slept here last night.” Will looks from the wings to the prayer poses. “Our perp intended to fly.”

“Can he?” Jack asks.

“Not sure yet.”

These days it's hard to tell.

…

Will repeats as much to Hannibal who looks down at him from the second floor of the office.

“There’s no one and only spiritual center of the brain. Any idea of God comes from many areas of the mind working together in unison.” Hannibal climbs down the ladder then tosses a book to Will.

“Maybe I’m wrong. How do you profile someone who has an anomaly in their head changing the way they think?” Will says, trying not to see his face where it's not meant to be. *Pareidolia* is what they call it, he thinks.

“A tumor can definitely affect brain function, even causing vivid hallucinations. However, what appears to be driving your Angel Maker to create heaven on Earth is a simple issue of mortality.” Hannibal approaches Will with an ease Will thinks is wrongly put.

“Can’t beat God, become him. Or his dove.”

“You said he was afraid.” Hannibal tilts his head.

Will looks at Hannibal through his lashes, trying hard not to swoop into a mind not his own. His back starts to ache. Will holds himself inwards, as if concave. “He feels abandoned.”

“Ever feel abandoned, Will?”

Will turns away from Hannibal, looking out the window to trace the shadow of a passing bird. “Abandonment requires expectation.”

Hannibal doesn't hesitate, “What were your expectations of Jack Crawford and the F.B.I.?”

Will is slightly thrown off by this twist in their conversation. He supposes that was the point, staring into Hannibal's sanguine eyes. There's a curiosity in them God might have in the face of a natural disaster. Or one of his smaller creations.

“Jack hasn’t abandoned me,” Will says, frowning.

“Not in any discernible way. Perhaps in the way Gods abandon their creations,” Hannibal goes on anyway.

The urge to laugh bubbles up in Will's chest. It's something both dry and sour as he recalls being five and waiting for his father by the schoolyard until ten p.m. Too small to walk home on his own. Too small to distinguish what he's feeling as separate from what kids his age usually feel towards their parents. “Well, this should be interesting.” Will focuses his eyes on Hannibal. “Please Doctor, proceed.”

“Jack gave you his word he would protect your head space. Yet he leaves you to your mental devices.” Hannibal arrives to a stop a foot away from Will.

“Are you trying to alienate me from Jack Crawford?” Will stares up at him unwaveringly. He's not unused to this sort of thing. This us vs. them assertion a certain type of person tries to produce in Will.

While he's eager to make Hannibal another parent for the orphaned Abigail there are limitations in the Hannibal to Will part of the equation.

As far as emotional stuff goes at least , Will thinks while trying not to look at where he knows his denture marks linger over Hannibal's wrists.

“I’m trying to help you understand this Angel Maker you seek,” Hannibal coaxes with the subtle wave of a hand. Disgustingly, his soothing voice works quite well. So does the view of one of Will's bite marks.

Will feels himself relax in Hannibal’s pointed attention. Even worse, he starts to *preen* . He stands a little straighter, curves his neck a little more. Will's hand brushes the side of his hair as he forces his eyes away, finally forcing himself to stop. *What's wrong with me?*

The corner of Hannibal's lips tick up.

“Help me…understand how to catch him,” Will grits out, unsure of his sudden frustration at the potential of being seen as less than formidable.

“If he were a classic paranoid schizophrenic,” Hannibal whets his tongue “-you might be able to influence him to become visible.”

“Scare him out into the daylight.”

“Might even get him to hurt himself if he hasn’t already.”

Will narrows his eyes at that. “If he were self-destructive, he wouldn’t be so careful.”

“Unless he’s being careful about his self-destruction. He’s making angels to pray over him when he sleeps.” Hannibal takes a seat in one of the chairs. He folds his hands on top of his knee, expecting Will to follow suit in taking a seat like he usually does(being the mirror that he is).

He doesn't.

“Who prays over us when we sleep?” Hannibal asks, his eyes are intrigued as Will walks towards where Hannibal sits instead.

Will's shadow falls over Hannibal's face, forcing the latter to look up at Will.

“I don't…fit with the sort of thing you're doing.” Will says slowly, like he's having trouble with the taste the words leave in his mouth.

“Where are you not fitting?” Hannibal asks, mirth dancing sharply over an edge in his eyes.

“Exclusivity to this- whatever this is. I don't need angels.”

I think you fit quite well. Goes unsaid by Hannibal but not unheard.

Chapter End Notes

Because Will is technically recovering from encephalitis by this point I'm trying to write him a little sharper than he was in the show now that his mind is a little clearer. He still gets a mindfuck in someways, I mean everyone does when it comes to Hannibal.

Sorry for the late and short update. Life has happened. I intended this chapter to finish off the angel maker arc but I couldnt keep you guys waiting any longer so we'll just have to try and catch up next week. Toodles.

What are you?

Chapter Summary

New development in Will.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will dreams of the wolf by the gorge for the fourth time that week. It starts the same, with the swooping sleek crow bodies crying into the frosty air. Will chases the wolf's howls until he meets those same eyes again. They don't ask for his help. But the urge to do so rings hollow in his ribs.

When he wakes that morning a set of large pawprints muddies the front porch.

…

The sound of leaves and branches crunching underfoot follows Will as he dives between another line of yellow police tape. He makes it only past the first line before being bombarded by a set of flashing lights.

"Will," calls Jack, voice deceptively authoritative and awake for 3 am.

"I'm thinking I'll buy some plush new dog beds with all this overtime," Will says by way of greeting.

"Remind me to take you out for a proper coffee sometime," agrees Jack.

"How many?"

"One."

“Strange for the angelmaker.”

“Not sure if it was just the angelmaker. Hope the Marlow case is still fresh in your mind.”

“What?” Will turns his narrowed gaze in Jack’s direction.

“I’m at a loss too.” Jack sighs, as if it pains him to admit, rarely as he does. They reach the edge of what becomes a narrow, steep end to the hill they stand on top of. From here night and the forest skirts at the horizon appear to merge into one black void.

“Glad I brought my hiking shoes,” Will mutters.

“I’m jealous.”

Will glances at Jack’s muddied dress shoes.

The pair make their way down towards the bobbing lights. Will’s stomach sinks as he spies the hung angel praying from a tree near the foot of the hill. The forensic squad greets them as Will and Jack amble down into the thick of the scene.

At first glance it has all the tell-tale signs of the angel maker’s signature, up until Will spies the crescent bite marks carved into the wrists of the praying hands. Will’s mind unpleasantly flashes Hannibal’s own wrists, (as of late) not dissimilar to those before his eyes now.

“Our she-wolf hasn’t forgotten us as much as we have her,” Jimmy pipes up as he swabs a sample from one of the bite marks.

Will frowns. He's not one to forget. "Mavis Cooper." he says, finally placing the angel's face with the latest addition to the Marlow file. "The missing *rat* from Rearview."

"Everyone clear out," Jack bellows. Like sheep, everyone herds away to leave Will alone with the discarded angel.

Will swallows, uncomfortably aware of the night and all its inhabitants.

The film unrolls in his mind like a peeled fruit, layer by layer, becoming tart through its rot as Will closes his eyes. *I maul into what's left of Mavis. A punishment befitting his crime of consuming his own child.*

A chill creeps up Will's spine as the growing sensation that he's not alone strays around the periphery of his subconscious instincts.

It's not enough. I'm still hungry.

Will glances up at the tenured wings flayed from the angel's back.

I've rekindled my inspiration.

Will's eyes fall to the wrists. Upon closer inspection he realizes there's a bite mark carved into Mavis' neck. The skin is raised around the deeper teeth divots, making it look far more severe than it actually is simply for aesthetics. No, not aesthetics. Hannibal's nape unveils itself in Will's mind. The bite Will left on it more stark than he realized. The coincidence grows too close for comfort.

The wolf from his dream comes to mind, in pain and crying.

Will is startled out of Amy Marlow's mentality as he stumbles and upheaves his dinner into a bush nearby.

It’s not long before he’s surrounded by sounds of concern and disgust as the revelation dawns on him.

She’s been watching me.

…

“Does Jack intend to let things muddle on this way?” Hannibal raises a brow over his glass of wine.

“I don’t know what you mean.” Will stares dumbly at the edge of Hannibal’s portfolio and thumbs at it like a nosy child.

“You deserve a security detail. She’s very likely scoped out the layout of your house and has only been biding her time.”

Will remains quiet.

Hannibal hums in realization as he sets down his wine beside the table while Will peels the first page open. It’s a drawing study of Francisco Goya’s most infamous painting. “You haven’t told him.”

“Jack thinks Amy Marlow’s copying the Angel Maker because she sees him as competition.” Will says like he’s hissing through the treatment of an infected wound. He hates misinterpretation of his character more than anything, and thus becomes more sympathetic to Amy Marlow.

“I suppose in some ways she does.” Hannibal tips his head, pointedly staring at Will. Hannibal sharpens his pencil with a scalpel as silence falls around them for the short moment it takes for the implication to set in.

“What are you insinuating?” Will scoffs.

“She intends to start a pack,” Hannibal says lightly, carefully fanning at the flames growing in Will’s mind. Whether to put them out or encourage them Will is not sure. “And you seem to have quelled your biting tendencies a significant amount since the night you found Mavis Cooper as an angel.” Hannibal puts down his freshly sharpened pencil by the portfolio. A pause. “Found something else to gnaw on, WIll?”

“I don’t tolerate jealousy, doctor.” Will tries not to seethe.

“I know my place, you’ve gone through huge pains to make it abundantly clear.” Hannibal’s eyes flash around the iris despite his calm tone.

Will glances at the scalpel still in Hannibal’s hand and then back into the other’s eyes.

The moment passes and Hannibal’s face returns easily into the tranquil passiveness Will has come to associate the doctor with. As comforting as it is disquieting.

“I don’t intend to answer Amy’s call,” Will says quietly, looking away from Hannibal’s watchful eyes and then glancing back again to gauge the other’s reaction.

Hannibal reveals nothing. He sets down the scalpel besides the portfolio and the men leave things at that.

…

Brian and Beverly playfully ruffle through Jimmy’s capybara ears like doting parents. Will tries not to look disgruntled at the sight though he notes that Jimmy seems to take no offense.

On the contrary, the stout man continues on his merry way to deliver a file to Jack's desk as if they aren't going to talk about their game strategy for *tic tac toe* with the Angel Maker.

Jack flips through it with a tight line across his lips as Jimmy waves hello to Will and Dr. Lecter.

"I hope they briefed you properly, Will." Jacks nods in the forensic squads' direction.

"We have a lead?" Hannibal asks as Will nods.

"A name to boot." Jack pins a photo on the bulletin board. "Meet God's right hand, Elliot Budish."

"35 year old truck driver. Knew I was right in distrusting them as a kid," Brian says.

"That's classist." Jimmy spins a pen in his hand. "He's got a fishing license too, and so does Will. That doesn't make *him* a serial killer."

"Not yet," Beverly jives with a wink in Will's direction.

"Check out the match from the national cancer date base," Will says to Hannibal.

Hannibal flips through the file handed to him before glancing at Will and then Jack. "We don't have much time. The brain tumor will fester to a boil."

"We're counting on that. He's gone missing." Jack points at the two men. "Hope you two are up for a field trip."

Will curses beneath his breath.

…

Will and Hannibal sit across from Emma Budish, a short woman who looks visibly anxious. Jack is notably absent, having to tend to his wife who he ill-timedly discovered is far along in lung cancer. Hannibal takes up the reign all too easily. Will suspects the older man might be a very good criminal profiler in another life.

“Has he contacted you since he left?” Hannibal asks in that pleasant manner Will is sure he purposefully employs to make everyone around him feel at ease. Perhaps even defenseless, at least in Will’s case.

“I left him. And no, he hasn’t.”

“Why did you leave?” Will asks.

“Because of his cancer.” Emma’s ears flay back, tiny grey things that they are. “Makes me sound like a horrible wife.”

“I’m sure you had your reasons,” Hannibal offers smoothly.

“I took a leave from work to be with him. I wanted to be there for him. But what he wanted was to be alone.”

Will studies the tidy surroundings of the room and ponders whether it was the right choice to interview Emma here where Elliot’s face still haunts all of them from several picture frames. He spots a couple of frames that have been placed flat down on their face, reflecting the house owner’s indecisiveness towards her husband.

“He kept pulling away and pulling away. He made it clear he didn’t want me there. Then it wasn’t clear. Then it didn’t matter why he was acting the way he was.”

“Was he ever violent, Mrs. Budish?”

Emma hesitates. “He was angry. Never hit me or the boys. I thought when he got weak enough, when the cancer got worse, it wouldn’t be confusing for them. They could just see him as a sick man, and not someone so terrified.”

Will tries not to flinch beneath the stare Hannibal slides him after Emma’s last sentence.

“Did your husband’s faith falter after he was told about the cancer?” Will asks, preparing the nib of his pen for the slate of his writing pad.

“Eric wasn’t ever religious.” Emma looks somewhat alarmed. “Is he doing something religious?”

“He may believe he is,” Will replies vaguely.

“Your husband’s dying, Mrs. Budish. Soon. We want to find him before he hurts himself or anyone else.”

“He died once before. Suffocated in a fire when he was a little boy,” Emma says feebly, as if she's suddenly remembered a crucial piece of information. “Firemen who resuscitated him said he must’ve had a guardian angel.”

“Where did this happen,” Will probes with sudden urgency.

“A farm where he grew up.”

…

There's not much to see in the farm upon entering. It's obvious that whatever plans Eliot had here have been abandoned along with the several bloody tools left in the hay.

"He wasn't here that long ago, this blood is still fresh." Will scans the remains of a fishline hanging from the ceiling. He leans down and finds a tuft of fur tucked into a crack in the wood, plucks it up like a weed. "Someone got here before us."

"Avian prey will seek higher ground to hide from a predator," Hannibal says.

Will nods, wondering whether this predator is more his than Elliot's. The pair of men rush to the car.

"The highest peaking point around here is the top of the ravine two miles from here."

"We'll have to hope he hasn't been ravaged before he can ascend to his creator."

Will looks ahead grimly as the car rumbles into tougher terrain. They park the car and Will takes a moment to call Jack both to update him and call for backup. In his distractedness he fails to realize that Hannibal has wandered off without him towards the edge of the ravine.

He stares in alarm as a figure emerges from a nearby crevice and rushes at Hannibal.

"Hannibal-" Will shouts.

.

Hannibal's weight swoops from underneath him as he's caught off guard by a leaded barreling body. The push sends his head careening into the side of a boulder and causes him to pass out for what could only be five seconds as colors flock his vision. He skids and rolls

on his side, slowly opening his eyes to the sound of growling and limbs struggling. It takes a moment for the sparks to clear from his line of sight and adjust to the visual of a large grey wolf snarling in Elliot's direction. Elliot waves a dagger dangerously in the wolf's direction, unafraid and seemingly unsurprised by its appearance.

Blood seeps from Hannibal's head into his eyes, as he notes with some dismay that parts of his antlers cracked off upon impact into the boulder. He warily tries to stand up despite his condition but gives pause when Elliot addresses him instead of the raging wolf standing between them.

"*Mephistopheles*." Elliot hisses. "I see *you* . Your flesh should release you." He stares back at the enraged wolf slowly prowling closer. "Step aside, beast, and let me kill him."

Saliva pools from the wolf's snarling lips.

"Will," Hannibal calls testingly.

The wolf pauses, one ear flicking back. The wolf's snout turns to face Hannibal. Icy blue eyes meet Hannibal's in a level gaze.

You're not Amy.

Hannibal can see power rippling beneath the beast's flesh, causing a cavern opening in his mind, coiling, full of prodding and insinuating dark desire.

Hannibal hears police sirens crying from a distance, *time is slipping in on us*. Still, he wants to see things run their natural course, though rushed they may be. He doesn't intervene as Elliot rushes in his direction with the dagger.

Hannibal finds it in him to produce the faintest of smiles through the trickling blood on his face as the wolf pounces on Elliot from the side and tears his arm off from its socket, a wave

of blood splattering on the ground. Eliot's scream slices into the air as he clutches at the remaining stump as he stumbles to his knees.

The wolf spits out the chunk and in its short distraction misses the movement of Elliot transforming into a dove. Elliot flies past the wolf and transforms back in time to grab hold of Hannibal's antlers with his remaining human hand. Hannibal reaches around to take the dagger from Elliot's hand to stab him but feels gravity leave him behind as Elliot sends them careening off the edge of the cliff.

"I'll grant you your angelhood," Hannibal snarls as they fall, using the dagger to castrate Budish. Budish spits blood into his face, smiling all the while they descend down like shooting stars. Elliot could easily transform into a dove again but Hannibal knows he has no intention of letting either of them live.

Hannibal rests his eyes for a moment, letting peace wash over him like a lacquer meant for polishing in preparation of death. He thinks he hears the sounds of yells from up above before a vapid amount of flapping feathers swallows him. The sound of wind rushing through his ears is soon blocked out by an all encompassing warmth , along with the shoddy scent of something with a ship on the bottle. Hannibal's eyes snap open in surprise as the tip of a nose touches his. Bright and alarmed blue eyes meet his, flooding Hannibal with a shock and the stirrings of awe he has seldom felt in his forty something years of living.

Clawed hands pry Elliot apart from Hannibal's body and throws his dead weight off to properly wrap solely around the stunned older man as Will brings himself and Hannibal into a slow descent onto a cluster of trees. Will sets the injured Hannibal carefully down against a tree before stumbling into the clearing on his knees. The wings on his back give a an audible shiver before retracting painfully into Will's trapezius. Will yells sharply as the feathers shed bloodily with each retraction until there is no sign of either of his wings having ever been. His sharp fingernails rake across the dirt as Will heaves, sweat pooling from his brow and sliding into the ground while Hannibal watches in fascination. A wolf and bird? Bird and wolf? Perhaps more? Hannibal isn't sure exactly what Will is, only that he intends to impart him as his soul's reflection.

It's not long before the police find them. Hannibal wonders if anyone saw either one of Will's different transformations. He can tell Will wonders the same before the man passes out, surrounded by his blood. Hannibal secretly hopes by all that is divine that no one did if only to keep the moment for themselves.

...

It takes a while to find Elliot. But when he is found all that is left is a crumpled dove with a missing wing.

Chapter End Notes

Gotta love chimeras. To whoever guessed that in the past chapters you were right on the money.

End Notes

Thanks for reading!! Comments or critiques make my hands write faster ;).

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!